AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended): A natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α in purified and/or isolated and/or synthesized form.

2. (Currently amended): A method for assaying a natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α with an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay, wherein an antibody (A) is used, wherein

(A) is anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody that can recognize the same epitope as a H44 mouse anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody.

3. (Previously presented): The method for assaying a soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α according to claim 2, wherein (A) is

(a) mouse anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody that can recognize the same epitope as a H44 mouse anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody.

4. (Previously presented): The method for assaying a soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α according to claim 3, wherein (a) is either one of (a1) to (a3):

(a1) H44 mouse anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody,

(a2) MAB840 mouse anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody, or

(a3) 117-10C mouse anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody.

5. (Previously presented): The method for assaying a soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α according to claim 2, wherein another antibody is

(B) anti human interleukin-18 receptor α polyclonal antibody.

6. (Previously presented): The method for assaying a soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α according to claim 5, wherein (B) is

(b) rabbit anti human interleukin-18 receptor α polyclonal antibody.

7. (Previously presented): The method for assaying a soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α according to claim 5, wherein a primary antibody in which an antibody (1) below is immobilized and a secondary antibody (2) below are used to detect a soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α, wherein

(1) is anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody, and

(2) is anti human interleukin-18 receptor α polyclonal antibody.

8. (Previously presented): A method for diagnose autoimmune diseases, wherein the method for assaying a soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α according to claim 2 is used.

9. (Currently amended): A kit for assaying a natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α, comprising an antibody (A) below as an immobilized antibody or a labeled antibody, wherein

(A) is anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody that can recognize the same epitope as a H44 mouse anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody.

10. (Currently amended): A kit for assaying a natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α, comprising two types of antibodies (1) and (2), one of the antibodies being immobilized and the other being labeled, wherein

(1) is mouse anti human interleukin-18 receptor α monoclonal antibody, and

(2) is rabbit anti human interleukin-18 receptor α polyclonal antibody.

11. (Currently amended): A medicinal composition comprising at least one selected from the group consisting of (X) and (Y) below and genes encoding these as an effective component, wherein

(X) is natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α, and

(Y) is protein that is constituted by an amino acid sequence in which one or several amino acids are deleted, substituted or added in (X) and has the same activity as the natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α.

12. (Currently amended): A drug for preventing or treating diseases caused by interleukin-18, comprising at least one selected from the group consisting of (X) and (Y) below and genes encoding these as an effective component, wherein

(X) is natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α, and

(Y) is protein that is constituted by an amino acid sequence in which one or several amino acids are deleted, substituted or added in (X) and has the same activity as the natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α.

13. (Currently amended): A drug for preventing or treating pulmonary disorders, comprising at least one selected from the group consisting of (X) and (Y) below and genes encoding these as an effective component, wherein

(X) is natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α, and

(Y) is protein that is constituted by an amino acid sequence in which one or several amino acids are deleted, substituted or added in (X) and has the same activity as the natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α.

14. (Currently amended): A medicinal composition comprising (x) or (y) below as an effective component, wherein

(x) is human interleukin-18 receptor α gene, and

(y) is gene that is constituted by a base sequence in which one or several bases are deleted, substituted or added in (X) and which codes the protein that has the same activity as the natural soluble human interleukin-18 receptor α.